



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 23, 2008

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## **COUNTY ANNOUNCES PLAN TO KEEP FIRE STATIONS OPEN** ***State Budget Cuts Threaten Fire Stations; County Offers to Shift Staff to Protect Region***

Acting swiftly to counteract California's latest budget crisis, the County of San Diego has proposed to temporarily shift some firefighters from County-contracted stations to ensure that all 18 CAL FIRE stations remain open this year.

The state abruptly announced this month that it would slash CAL FIRE's Southern California budget by \$6.3 million ---- \$1.2 million in San Diego County ---- because of continuing budget problems.

The cuts threatened to shut down eight local CAL FIRE stations that provide fire protection and emergency medical response.

"This is a one-time, temporary fix to ensure that our region is adequately protected, particularly during the winter months," said Vice Chairwoman Dianne Jacob who represents many fire-prone rural communities. "This is not a bailout or a backfill and we expect that the state will fully fund CAL FIRE next year."

County officials are offering to help prevent the closures by redeploying firefighters at CAL FIRE stations that the County pays CAL FIRE to operate through the winter months. Some crews would be reduced from three firefighters to two. The extra firefighters would be shifted to help keep all CAL FIRE stations running until the state restores CAL FIRE's funding in April.

The County would not spend any additional money on fire services and the staffing shift was offered as a one-time solution until the state can re-staff fire stations year round.

County and CAL FIRE officials said that temporarily reducing the number of firefighters to two per station was a better way to protect the public than closing the stations down.



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